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DEPT FOR INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: PM SACKS TWO MINISTERS; SCORE ONE FOR PARLIAMENT

REF: MANAMA 265

Classified By: DCM Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Bahrain's parliament, dominated by Shi'a and Sunni conservatives, has scored a victory with the dismissal of two ministers who refused to cooperate with parliamentary oversight committees. End summary.

12. (U) A royal decree issued in the name of King Hamad September 24 appointed Dr. Faisal Al-Hamer as the new Minister of Health and Jihad Bu Kamal as the new Minister of Information. They replace Dr. Nada Haffadh and Dr. Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar at the respective ministries.

13. (C) Appointed in April 2004, Dr. Nada Haffadh was Bahrain's first woman minister. Her departure leaves Minister of Social Development Fatima Al-Belooshi as the lone remaining woman in the cabinet. When a parliamentary committee attempted to question Haffadh over the poor quality of services in Bahrain's public health system, Haffadh refused to attend the committee's meetings. In response, the committee's chairman, Al-Wifaq MP Mohammed Al-Mizal, joined by both Shi'a and Sunni MPs, publicly called for Haffadh's dismissal.

14. (C) As Information Minister, Dr. Abdul Ghaffar similarly refused to cooperate with a parliamentary inquiry, in this case an investigation of a performance at the "Spring of Culture 2007" festival which some MPs - mostly Sunni Salafists - later denounced as immodest (reftel).

15. (C) Comment: Bahrain's parliament is still, trying to carve out its place the country's political order. This cabinet reshuffle shows that, while the King and PM retain firm control over the making and unmaking of cabinet officers, there is a limit to how much parliamentary dissatisfaction with ministers they will tolerate. Oversight committees - and the religious conservatives who dominate them - will now act with even more assertiveness.

16. (C) Sunni Islamist MPs will also likely view Dr. Abdul Ghaffar's ouster, connected as it was to the Spring of Culture controversy, as a victory for their campaign to reverse cultural liberalization. The health portfolio, meanwhile, has traditionally been a Shi'a ministry. Dr. Haffadh's replacement by Dr. Al-Hamer, a Sunni, reduces Shi'a cabinet members from five to four out of a total of 26 ministers. However, MP Mohammed Al-Mizal, the Shi'a chairman of the health oversight committee, publicly welcomed Dr. Al-Hamer's appointment and expressed a desire to work with him. End comment.

17. (U) Biographic information on the new ministers follows:

-- Minister of Health: Dr. Faisal Al-Hamer was born in 1944

into a Sunni family and spent 32 years in the Ministry of Health, including serving as Dean of the College of Health Sciences from 1987-2002. He became a Trustee of the University of Bahrain in 2000. Dr. Al-Hamer holds a BA in Clinical Health and an MA in Clinical Biochemistry from the University of Alexandria, Egypt, as well as an MA in Health Profession Education from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a PhD in Health Planning from the University of Leeds. He is married to Maha Al-Hamer, they have four grown children (Nawaf, Saud, Talal, and Rula).

-- Minister of Information: Born June 6, 1959, Jihad Bu Kamal, a Sunni, won a seat in the 2002 parliamentary elections and served in the Council of Representatives until 2006, when he was appointed to the Shura Council. Bu Kamal distinguished himself in parliament as chairman of the Financial Affairs and Economic Committee, delivering two budgets for the government quickly and without controversy. As an economist, Bu Kamal presides over the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Financial Resources Committee, and is a member of the Bahrain Monetary Institute's Bank Deposits Protection Committee. He serves as Deputy Executive Director of Ibrahim Bu Kamal and Sons, a wholesale trading firm. He obtained a BA in Accounting and Economics from Poona University in India in 1980, and is widely regarded as a talented and capable businessman and technocrat. Bu Kamal is married and has three sons and one daughter.

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